



2020 EDITION

THE PARENTS'  
GUIDE TO

HELPING YOUR CHILD KNOW

**WHAT'S NEXT**

The following pages have been selected as most appropriate for GCSE level students', the full guide can be downloaded here <https://www.theparentsguideto.co.uk/whats-next>

# What to do after GCSEs

What your child chooses to do after Year 11 can have a big impact on their future. The choices they make now will influence how easily they will be able to get a job or enter further education when they are older. The main options at this stage are for them to go on to full time education or take an apprenticeship/training. Things they need to consider are the type of qualification they are going to study; what type of learning suits them best (classroom or practical); and which subjects they enjoy.

If they already know the career path they're hoping to take, they may want to choose subjects that offer a more obvious route to that career. In theory that can make choosing subjects easier, but sometimes there's a conflict in the subjects they enjoy and do well at versus the subjects they will need. Of course, they can also go straight into employment, but this must include some guided learning hours.

There's much more choice at sixth form than GCSE, so there will be many subjects available that are new to them. Don't worry about them taking something they have never studied and then finding out they don't enjoy it or aren't good at it; they can make changes at the start of Y12.

It's important to bear in mind that whatever they choose to study in sixth form, whilst it will influence what they do

afterwards, it will not close any doors. If they make a mistake, there's still plenty of opportunity to change direction (of course, this may take a little additional work on their part). Additionally, should they choose to go straight into work and change their mind later, there's always the chance to pick up their education at a later date.

## Summary:

**There are lots of choices available to your child once they've completed GCSEs, so make sure they know what's on offer.**

1. A level and IB are more suited to theoretical learning;
2. BTECs and T Levels are great for those who enjoy practical experience and coursework;
3. EPQ offers the chance to earn more UCAS points as well as undertaking a project centred around your child's personal interests;
4. Apprenticeships, traineeships and internships provide on the job training and valuable experience.

# What to do after sixth form

What your child chooses to do after sixth form (or college) is exciting but can be nerve-racking. There are lots of options available and understanding the pros and cons between different choices can be confusing.

It's not just about deciding whether to go to work or continue further education – although that's a good starting point. Important considerations include how long they want to continue studying, how they will finance living expenses and course fees (and whether you can afford to help them), whether they want to study in a more academic environment or in a more practical environment (such as studying whilst working).

Many qualifications can be built upon, so they may commit to one year of further study and then decide to increase it for another year or two to get a higher qualification. This flexibility can be very useful, particularly for students who are not keen to commit to long-term studies after school, but find that they enjoy it once they've got started. In the case of degrees, they will need to commit to the length of study (minimum three years) from the beginning.

## Summary:

**There are lots of choices available to your child once they've completed sixth form, so make sure they know what's on offer.**

1. Higher education options (such as university or Higher National Diplomas) are more suited to theoretical learning;
2. Apprenticeships trainee and internship are great for those who enjoy practical experience and coursework and are a great way to get first hand experience of what a job is like;
3. School leaver programmes offer opportunities to join the workplace and begin skills development and careers development through experience as well as study;
4. Other options include taking a gap year, starting their own business or entering the world of work.

# Levels of Education

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland there are 8 qualification levels (1 - 8) plus an entry level qualification for those just starting. Generally, the higher the level, the more difficult the qualification is.

Levels 1-3 are typically taught in schools and colleges.

With so many different qualifications, it can be hard to know what they mean and where they might lead to next. To help you understand, here is a summary of what the levels mean highlighting academic, vocational and work-based routes to higher education.

Level	Qualification / educational routes				
8	Doctorate (PhD)			NVQ 8	
7	Masters degree (MA)			Degree apprenticeship / NVQ 5, 6, 7	
6	Bachelors degree BA or BSc				
5	Foundation degree FdA or FdSc	Higher National Diploma (HND)			
4				Higher apprenticeship / NVQ 4	
3	A levels Grades A-E	International Baccalaureate	T Levels	BTEC (extended) diploma BTEC certificate	Advanced apprenticeship / NVQ 3
2	GCSE Grades 4- 9 (C, B, A or A*)			BTEC first diploma	Intermediate apprenticeship / NVQ 2
1	GCSE Grades 1- 3 (D,E,F, G or U)			Foundation diploma / entry level qualifications	Traineeship / NVQ 1
		Academic route		Vocational route	Applied / work route

# Apprenticeships

What your child chooses to do after GCSE or sixth form is both exciting and daunting. There are lots of options available and understanding the pros and cons between different choices can be challenging. Apprenticeships should not be over-looked; they offer the opportunity to combine study with paid employment resulting in a professional qualification. There are no tuition fees (these are covered by the employer and the government) and the salary can cover living expenses.

Apprenticeships used to be associated with trade industries (such as electricians, mechanics or plumbers). Nowadays, apprenticeships can be taken in a wide range of industry sectors and provide entry to all types of careers, including accountancy, banking, IT, law, management and television.

Relatively new to the apprenticeship suite are "degree apprenticeships", offering an earn while you learn route to BSc or BA status. In other words, the end qualification

is the same as if your child had attended university full time, the difference is that they will not have incurred any debt in tuition fees and will finish their degree with robust and transferable workplace skills.

Taking an apprenticeship is not an easy option and competition can be fierce. It takes organisation and dedication to balance work, where your child will be expected to contribute to the same standards as everyone else, and study. Holidays are far fewer than at college or university. However, if they have a more practical, work-related bias towards learning this will suit them well and they will obtain valuable experience which will strengthen opportunities in finding rewarding work when the apprenticeship is over.

Selecting the right apprenticeship will require your child to have reasonable confidence in the type of career they wish to follow although there is some flexibility. So how do you help them decide? We'll guide you.

## Useful links

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>

<https://www.ucas.com/understanding-apprenticeships>

<https://www.theparentsguideto.co.uk/tips/categories/apprenticeships>

# Apprenticeship levels



## **LEVEL 2**

### *Intermediate apprenticeships*

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#### **Typical length**

12-18 months

#### **Entry requirements:**

None or few

#### **Qualifications obtained:**

GCSE, BTEC or equivalent

#### **Who's it for?**

Mostly for 16-year-olds with limited or no academic qualifications.



## **LEVEL 3**

### *Advanced apprenticeships*

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#### **Typical length**

12-24 months

#### **Entry requirements:**

Usually 5 GCSEs

#### **Qualifications obtained:**

A levels or equivalent

#### **Who's it for?**

Mostly for 16-year-olds with reasonable academic achievements but who don't want to study in sixth form.



## **LEVEL 4/5** *Higher apprenticeships*

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### **Typical length**

3-5 years

### **Entry requirements:**

A levels or equivalent

### **Qualifications obtained:**

Higher national diploma / foundation degree

### **Who's it for?**

Mostly for those who want to qualify for professional career paths without attending university or college. Sometimes referred to as 'school leaver' or 'non-graduate' programmes.



## **LEVEL 6/7** *Degree apprenticeship*

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### **Typical length**

3-7 years

### **Entry requirements:**

At least 2 A levels or equivalent

### **Qualifications obtained:**

A BA or BSc degree or higher

### **Who's it for?**

Mostly for those with excellent sixth form results that want to study for a degree or similar whilst working. Aimed at attracting high-calibre candidates to bridge professional skills gaps.

# Is an apprenticeship the right choice?

## ADVANTAGES

Apprenticeships provide focused and applied training for those who already have a strong interest in a job or industry.

Not everyone is suited to academic style learning and apprenticeships provide a practical approach to obtaining qualifications.

Apprenticeships provide paid employment. In addition, your child will leave debt free.

Apprenticeships develop key transferable skills which are considered lacking in the labour market.

Apprenticeships may provide future employment within the company and working within an organisation may reveal job roles they did not know existed.

Gaining work experience and on the job training may provide your child with a competitive advantage when applying for full time employment.

Some students flourish with the responsibility and structure of an apprenticeship.

Degree apprenticeships offer the chance to gain a BA or BSc without incurring the debts associated with studying at university.

## CONSIDERATIONS

Apprenticeships may narrow options early on. Your child will need to have a fairly clear idea of the type of career they wish to pursue.

It may be difficult for your child to combine studying with working.

The salary of an apprentice can be quite low and your child will also need to consider financing their travel and living expenses if they are not living at home. Furthermore, your child may need to pay back their course fees if they choose to leave their apprenticeship early.

Your child may feel that they are missing out on the 'student life' offered at universities. However, some universities and colleges still offer their degree apprentices a strong student experience.

Student fairs and networking events at university enable students to explore different career routes that they were not aware of when leaving school.

Many companies provide graduate schemes for university leavers on completion of their degree.

Entering the work place at an early age may lead to fatigue.

Degree apprenticeships are still quite new, so there is only a limited number of vacancies available at the moment.

**For more details, please download the full guide**

<https://www.theparentsguideto.co.uk/tips/categories/apprenticeships>